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THE ORCHARD BOOKS

EXTRA SERIES

V:—*The Amending of Life*

THE AMENDING OF LIFE

By

RICHARD ROLLE
of Hampole, Hermit

being a translation into English of his treatise

“DE EMENDACIONE VITAE”

made in the year 1434 by

RICHARD MISYN
Carmelite

Edited and slightly modernised by

A. P.

with an Introduction by the same



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“Wonderfully Jesus works in His lovers, the while
He saves them from the lusts of flesh and blood
through His tender love.”—*The Form of Perfect
Living*, R. ROLLE.

“Take Jesu in thy thinking, His Love He will
thee send.”
Hymn, R. ROLLE.

“Ghostly gladness in Jesus and joy in heart with
sweetness in soul of the savour of Heaven, is health.
My life is in Love, and lightsomeness laps my thought.
I dread naught that may work me woe so much
I wot of weal. It were no wonder if Death were
dear, that I might see Him that I seek. List and
learn of this Love, and thou shalt naught mislike.
Look thou lead thy life in lightsomeness, and heavi-
ness shall be held away. In gladness of God ever-
more make thou thy glee.”—*Short MS.*, R. ROLLE.

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Amending of Life, Emendatio Vitae*, is one of two Latin treatises by Richard Rolle, which were rendered into English (of the Lincoln dialect) by Richard Misyn, Carmelite, in 1434. The text now presented to the reader has been slightly modernised, so as to make it more accessible than it is in the form of the early English texts.

It is no easy matter to assign the authorship of the immense number of religious treatises that are freely ascribed to Rolle, in the various collections of MSS. which remain to us. In fact, there are few such that have not at some time or other assumed his name. There seems no doubt that this is a genuine work, and, in any case, it is an admirable résumé of his teaching. So far as the English writings are concerned, the dialect can afford us some guidance as to author, for except for a short period of University life at Oxford, Richard Rolle never left his native Yorkshire, and, when he wrote in his mother-tongue, he naturally used the northern dialect.

Horstmann has provided students of early

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English texts with a valuable collection of some of the finest examples of the work of Rolle and his school, which help us to appreciate the part that the hermit of Hampole played as pioneer of mysticism in this country, as Blessed Henry Suso, his contemporary, did in Germany. If, as Horstmann remarks, the final developments of scholasticism belong to England, it seems equally true that nowhere has mysticism flourished more abundantly than in our soil, and at a time when the eremitic way of life was extolled by so many religious writers as the highest means of attaining union with God.

Richard Rolle was born at Thornton Dale in Yorkshire, about the year 1300. He died at the age of forty-nine. His father, William Rolle, may possibly have been a dependent of the great Neville family; at any rate, he was a man of some standing. At the age of nineteen, we find Richard at Oxford, apparently studying theology and the Biblical writings, and under the spell of St Bonaventure's teaching, rather than a disciple of the school of Duns Scotus.

With all his spirit Richard seems to have rebelled against scholasticism, and in his earlier private writings one sees evidences of the struggle of his ardent nature against the formalism and subtleties of the schools.

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After a short time at the University he shakes off what was for him an atmosphere at once uncongenial and cramped.

A charming story is told of his return to his Yorkshire home with the definite decision to renounce University life and become an anchorite. He must wear eremitical dress, so he coaxes for and finally receives two of his sister's kirtles, a white one and a grey one. With youthful impetuosity and in spite of her protests, Richard seizes the white frock, shearing off its buttons, and so disposing the garment next his skin. Then he takes the grey, removing the sleeves in the same ruthless fashion, and slipping the grey over the white. Now for the hood! One of his father's is procured, and so Richard takes on the semblance of the hermit, and sets forth from home, leaving a sister to raise a hue and cry for Brother Richard gone mad! The next news of him is in the church of Topcliffe, near Thirsk, on the estate of Sir John Dalton, whose sons had been Richard's contemporaries at Oxford. He kneels in her ladyship's own seat, and the servants would have driven him away; but she, seeing his deep devotion, would not have him disturbed. He seems to have been recognised in the end, and invited to dine with the family, but he hides away in some out-house—whether in humility, or

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because he chose to avoid the acquaintances so anxious to do him honour, is not clear—but he is eventually discovered, and brought to table. Finally Sir John gave him a cell on his estate, and provided him with his daily necessities. Thus did Richard become the solitary he so desired; a layman, who gave himself to prayer and spiritual exercises, who found that *Pax est in cella, nil exterius, nisi bella*.

Yet the peace came not at once, but through successive stages of mystical experience, as sweetly set forth in many of his treatises and poems. In spite of all his spiritual struggles he held fast to the dominating thought that the best thing he, Richard Rolle, desirous of the love of God, can do, is to sit, “not run about: sit—sit on, inactive,” absorbed in “love-longing, and in still mourning.” The struggles of his own interior life seem to have sufficed for him as experience, in the lonely cell where he passed through the stages of purgation, in fastings, watchings and disciplinary exercises, and of illumination, where his love and sorrow were kindled by meditation on the Love of God and the Passion of Christ, up to the third stage of contemplation, where first the fires of Love seized and consumed his spirit, and heavenly music filled his ears. We learn from his own

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story that four years and more were occupied in passing through these phases, but it is not certain at what time he left the shelter of the Daltons' hospitality; it may have been the death of one or other of his patrons which drove him out, to find for several years no settled home, but much misunderstanding and many enemies.

During this period he lived sometimes for months together in seclusion on friendly ground, with cell and sustenance provided; then friction—Richard was of an irritable temperament, and perhaps never more so than in those days—or the tales of enemies would compel him onwards again, and he would wander the countryside, consoling the poor and afflicted, and sounding forth his cry of "Love" to all who would listen. He suffered severely from poverty, "frost and cold, and only rags to cover me, and no water to drink," with "intolerable headaches," denounced, too, as a vagabond, a scamp, a hypocrite: so he tells us in the *Melum*, written perhaps when he was about twenty-six years of age. And so he learns that wonderful sympathy with the suffering sick and poor, and that indignation with the unjust and oppressor which characterise the writings that followed. One pictures him trudging up hill and down dale, comely and fresh complexioned, but worn with a

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hard life of exposure, ejaculating his love-poems to Jesus and his call to the countryside: "O come, ye youths and maidens, learn of me, a wonderful lover, how to love."

But his preaching—if so it may be styled—was also denunciatory. With uncompromising sternness, not to say bitterness, he raised a challenge against the vices and corruptions that had crept into the Church and the world, sparing neither priest nor layman in his assertions. Neither did he spare the scholars, pedants and formalists—"in knowledge the highest, but in the Love of God *inferiores*"—insisting always on the necessity for that inward feeling of devotion as the gift to be desired above all learning. His detractors, meanwhile, complained that he was no loyal son of Mother Church, that he was neither prelate, monk nor priest, and had no authority to prate to others, he a rustic, an idiot, with no skill in reasoning or disputation. Some complained that he sat idle and did no works of mercy; others that he ran about the towns and villages and left his contemplative life, which he had embraced as his vocation, to assist the sick and poor who were none of his concern. Another cause of offence was that he "sat at the tables of rich men and mixed with all alike." These critics did not add: "As did our Blessed Lord."

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It is certain from his writings—for it was a point on which Richard continually insisted—that, however much an individualist and an extremist in his views, he conformed throughout his life, without any swerving, to the doctrines of holy Mother Church; though he spared no criticism on the conduct of many who represented her as teachers and ministers, he remained rigidly orthodox in matters of belief.

At last Rolle, worn out with wanderings and weariness of mind and body, excused himself from the world again, and sought the solitude of a cell. During the latter years of his life he seems to have led a hermit's life at Hampole, inactive and absorbed in contemplation, but still proclaiming through his many writings the call of the Love of God. These years were the most fruitful of his life. The bitterness in his nature had died in his own death to the world, and Love now filled his thoughts and held him captive. "Love will not be idle: if it cease of working, know it cools and fades away"; and so he wrote his songs to our Lord and His Blessed Mother, of the Love of Jesus, his Dear and his Darling, Jesus Who in his mouth is Honey, and in his heart Melody. "Thou shalt think Joy to hear that Name named; Sweetness to speak it; Mirth and Song to think it. Have

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this Love in thy heart and work, and thou hast all that may be said or writ; for fulness of Love is Charity, and on that hangeth all."

The *Ego Dormio* is full of ejaculations on the Joy of Love, Sweetness and ghostly Joy, in praying and thinking on Christ's Passion and cruel Death.

Naked His white Breast
And red His bloody Side;
Wan was His fair hue,
His Wounds deep and wide.

"To think on this is great pity, and shall draw thy heart up and make thee fall to weeping and have great loving to Jesus."

Rolle's friendship with Margaret Kirby, recluse, and the nuns of Hampole, to whom he acted as spiritual adviser, must have been a great solace during these years. No doubt we owe the preservation of many of his writings to the solicitude of these good women, who are said to have collected his MSS. after his death and kept them chained up; probably to prevent their use by the Lollards, who were already engaged on their work of mutilating religious treatises to serve their own ends, and could perchance have found, in many of his writings, passages which, when wrested from their context, might have served heretical purposes.

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One of the later MSS. of his *Commentary on the Psalter* states that it was written by Richard Rolle at the bidding of Margaret Kirby, anchoress. *The Form of Living* also was addressed to Margaret, and thus he ends the book: "I have shortly made for thee the Form of Living, and how thou may come to Perfection, and to love Him that thou hast taken thee to. If it do thee good and profit thee, thank God, and pray for me. The grace of Jesus Christ be with thee and keep thee. Amen."

Richard Rolle died at Hampole on September 29, 1349, perhaps of the plague then raging in the north. Miracles of healing were recorded after his death by the nuns, who already venerated him as a Saint. There is a story which tells that Margaret herself, in her cell at Ainderby, twelve miles away, had been ill for days with a "seizure," suffering greatly, and with no power of speech. A labourer at last was found to fetch Richard Rolle, and by his coming she was cured. Twice this kind of thing happened, and twice the anchoress recovered at the sight of the holy hermit. Then he seems to have assured her that it should not happen again in his lifetime.

The Fire of Love is perhaps the best-known of Rolle's works, and it bears a close

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resemblance in style to *The Amending of Life*. *The Form of Living* and the *Ego Dormio* contain passages of great beauty, and may be considered two of the most remarkable of the English mystical treatises. "I will that thou be climbing Jesus-ward, and put all thy love and service in Him," he cries; "for we live but in a point, and soothly our life is less than a point if we liken it to the Life Everlasting. . . . If we waste it in earthly love and vanities, full grievously shall we be punished. But we must exercise us manfully in the Love of God, and do good to all we may whiles our short life lasteth."

"If thy life be not burning in His Love, little be thy delight. But thou shalt come with great travail to this prayer and thinking, and speak thus in thy heart: 'Loved be Thou, King: and thanked be Thou, King: and praised be Thou, King: and blessed be Thou, King: Jesus, all my Joying and all my Good. Jesus, that for me spilt His Blood and died on the Rood. Jesus give me grace to sing the Song of thy Loving.'"

Nowhere is this Song more beautifully sung by the hermit of Hampole than in the chapter "Of the Love of God," which is included in this short treatise. Rolle is an individualist in style, as in all else, but once

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his peculiarities are mastered, the true poet as well as the great mystic must surely make his fresh appeal to his fellow-countrymen to-day.

A. P.

Feast of the Epiphany, 1927.



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BOOK THE FIRST

OF CONVERSION OR TURNING

TARRY thou not to turn to our Lord, nor put it off from day to day, for oftentimes cruelty of deed ravisheth wretches, and those that are anxious now to be converted may be suddenly devoured by bitter pain. Also it may not be numbered how many are beguiled by wicked presumption.

Truly it is a great sin to trust in God's mercy and yet not to cease from sin: trowing that His mercy be mickle that He will not rightly give pain to sinners. Work ye, therefore, while it is yet day, for the night truly cometh, in which no man may work. "Light," or "day," we may call this life, in which we ought never to cease our good works, knowing that death is certain, but the hour of death truly uncertain.

Night, we may truly call death, in which our bodily members are bound, and we may no longer then work any devilish thing; but after death we shall receive joy or torment, according to our works.

In a point we live—yea, less than a point, for if we would liken all our life to life everlasting, it is as naught.

Therefore, how should we waste it in love of vain things, negligent, all day idle, without the fear of grievous damnation? Lord, therefore turn us, and we shall be turned: heal us, and we shall be healed. Many truly are not healed, but their wounds fester and rot; for to-day they turn to God, to-morrow from Him: to-day they do penance, to-morrow they are turned to ill-doing. Of such it is said, "We have cured Babylon," and it is not healed, for to Christ it is not truly turned. What, then, is turning *to* God, but turning from the world and from sin, from the fiend and from the flesh?

What is turning *from* God, but a turning from Good unchangeable to good changeable, to liking of the beauty of the creature, to the fiend's works, to lusts of the flesh and the world? For not by going of the feet are we turned to God, but by the changing of our desires and manners.

Turning to God is done also by the sharpness of our minds while we draw into Him, thinking on His commands and His counsels, that they may be fulfilled of us: and that, wherever we may be, sitting or standing, the dread of God may not pass from our hearts.

I speak not of the dread that has pain, but of that dread which is in Charity, with which we give reverence to the Presence of so great Majesty, and always dread lest in any little

thing we may offend. Thus soothly disposed, from the world to God are we truly turned. And this is naught else but to put away all lusts, to suffer all bitterness gladly for the love of God, to forego all idle occupation and all worldly errands, in so much that our soul be truly turned to God, and dieth pithily to all else.

They that are given to these heavenly desires, therefore, shall have God evermore before their eyes, that unweariedly they may ever behold Him, as the holy prophet beareth witness where he said: *Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper*—that is to say, *In my sight evermore our Lord I saw before me*—not only the space of an hour, as do they that set all the fair and lovely of earth before their hearts, the which they behold, in which their love is set, and in which they desire to rest.

And after that the prophet sayeth: *Oculi mei semper ad Dominum, quoniam ipse evellet de laqueo pedes meos*—that is, *My eyes are evermore to our Lord, for He shall deliver my feet from the snare*. By this it is shewed that, except our inward eye be unweariedly raised to Christ, we may not escape the snare of temptation. And there are many hindrances to this fixing of our eyes on God alone, of which we write some: Abundance of riches, Flattery of women, Fairness or Beauty of youth. These are the three-fold

rope, that is hard to break; yet it needs must be broken that Christ may be praised. He that truly desires to love Christ with a Joy unmeasured and without heaviness casteth back all things that hinder him. And in such a case he spares neither father nor mother nor himself, he takes cheer and comfort from no man, but does violence to everything that hindereth him from Christ, and breaketh down all obstacles together, and thinketh whatever he may do it is little so that he may come to the love of Christ. From vices he will fly and look not to worldly solace, but set wholly to God, forgetting all fleshly things.

All inward he will be gathered, all lifted up to Christ, so that when he seemeth cast down or humbled in the sight of man, then truly is he most glad.

Yet many say to God that they are turned, and yet they are held back by this or that worldly occupation—whose coldness of heart we reprove. For without a doubt, if they were touched with the least spark of Christ's love, they would seek with all busy-ness which way they should come to His service, and in seeking they should not cease till they had found. Excuses oftentimes they frame, which rather accuse them the more.

Riches forsooth draw many away, flattery of women beguiles them, and they that have

long done well are sometimes by these things drowned in the worst dyke.

The newly-turned ought therefore to fly all occasions of sin, or aught which may stir them to evil, in sight, or deed or word. The more unlawful a thing is, the more it is to be forsaken altogether. The fiend also riseth up against those that are newly-turned to God, and ceases not if he can to kindle fleshly and worldly desires in them. He brings to mind sins before committed—to the affliction of the contrite one, and rouses again in him unworthy desires that had been as it were quieted.

In all these temptations the manly penitent must take spiritual armour upon himself to withstand the devil, and all his suggestions and fleshly desires he must destroy, and evermore desire God's love; for the world's despising is not yet gone from him—of which we shall next speak.



BOOK THE SECOND

OF THE WORLD'S DESPISING

TO despise this world is to despise all temporal and passing things, to pass this life without their love. To seek in this life nothing but God is not-to-be-charged of all vain-glory and solace, scarcely taking thy necessities; and, if these be sometimes wanting, to bear it well. This is despising of the world.

Have this in mind if thou wilt not be slain.

Thus the world is despised and not loved.

All soothly that we love we worship; as foul also it is to worship dirt, as it is to love earthly things.

Therefore this rich miser, in foulest filth and stink, binds himself a thrall, and joys to be called lord of men—though thrall to vice. If a man be lord of men—not of nature, that is, but of fortune—that man is subject to vice, and of a froward will.

Put away therefore the froward will, and from the fiend thou shalt be free; from sin made the servant of righteousness, that teaches thee to despise earthly things.

Covetousness of the world and God's

love are truly contrary, and rest not together in one soul: be the place ever so strait, the one or the other must needs fall out. The more soothly you cast out Covetousness, the more you taste of God's love: the more Covetousness, the less Charity. O wretched soul! what seekest thou in this world where thou seest all things dissoluble and passing? They soonest beguile thee that most flatter thee! Why busiest thou thyself with deadly things? Why yearnest thou with great desire for things that shall perish? Seest thou not that they perish sooner than they are gotten? But I wot where thou dwellest, where Satan's seat is, that hath blinded thy eye, and deceived thee, so that thou shouldst desire fleeting things, and love hateful things, and despise abiding things, and draw to vanishing things. And so thou settest thyself on a false ground, and when thou thinkest to stand, in fire thou fallest.

Dwellers in temporal plenty, by five things their love is beguiled: by Riches, by Dignity, by Will, by Power and by Worship. These bind them in sins, strengthening them in faults: with these lusts they are overcome, and never are they loosed but by death. But their loosing is too late, when there is no more but endless pain. These hinder them from despising the world, and from the desire of God's love; from knowledge of

themselves, and from desire of the heavenly kingdom. No man may be saved except he cease to love the world and all that is therein. See to this, therefore, while heat is in thy body, and the fair age of youth abides. What things shall he like that is disposed to love Christ? Youth he shall despise, his strength he shall keep for God, riches he shall count for naught. All things in this world he shall despise as passing shadows.

O fleshly lover, in the flesh what findest thou worthy of thy delight? Form or shape, please they thee? or hast thou joy in a skin, and takest not heed of what is under a skin? Or knowest thou not that fleshly fairness is but the covering of corruption and dregs, and oftentimes cause of damnation?

Be it enough, therefore, to be despised by all, but God to love; with God to be, in God to joy: from Him never to part, but to draw with desire unslaked to Him.

To despise the world is the soul compelled that is so full of wretchedness; that world in which malice abounds, persecution destroys, lust frets, slander makes bitter, where all things are confused without order, where neither righteousness is loved, nor truth approved, where faithfulness is unfaithful and friendship cruel—standing in prosperity and failing in adversity. Other things should

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move us to the world's despising: to wit, changing of time, shortness of life, uncertainties and vanities of present things, the truth of Joys to come. Choose what you will: if thou love the world, thou shalt perish with the world; if thou love Christ, with Him shalt thou reign.



BOOK THE THIRD

OF POVERTY

I*F thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me, saith Christ.*

In forsaking earthly things, and in following Christly things, He shows that Perfection lieth.

Forsooth all they do not follow Christ who have even forsaken all their goods; for many may be worse after this forsaking than they were beforehand. For some fall to back-biting, to envy and malice, setting themselves as above others, praising their own poor estate, despising the lives of others. How true it is that in *nothing* in this world lies satisfaction, for by how many devices the fiend beguileth souls unto damnation! Thou who canst truly understand my meaning will regard thy poverty in another light. When Christ says *Go and sell all* he would signify the changing of thy very thoughts and desires. Let him that was proud become humble; he that was wrathful be meek; he that envied, let him have charity; he that was covetous be both generous and discreet. And if he were formerly unclean, now should he abstain from all appearance of evil; and

he that hath been intemperate, let him now become temperate in all things. Truly he that aforetime loved the world over-much, will now give himself altogether to Christ's love, and set all his heart's desire on eternal joys. To him shall holy poverty be fruitful, and all ills that he may suffer for Christ's sake, shall be as a glorious crown unto him.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God. And what is this poverty of spirit but the meekness of mind, in which a man can see clearly his own weakness? And seeing that he cannot come to perfect steadfastness but by the grace of God, he would forsake all things that might hinder him from this grace, and set his desire only in the joys of his Maker. And as from one root spring many branches, so from poverty, embraced in this fashion, shall spring many virtues and wonders before undreamt of. Not as some that do indeed change their clothing but not their souls, but in this case it seemeth that they, who forsake riches in this spirit, forsake also innumerable vices.

What is worse than a poor man become proud? What is more accursed than an envious beggar? If thou wouldst truly forsake all things for God, consider more what thou dost despise, than what thou dost

forsake. And take busy heed how thou dost follow Christ in the manner of living. *Learn of Me*, He says, *for I am meek and lowly of heart*. He says not: "Learn of Me, for I am poor," for truly poverty by itself is not virtue, but rather a wretched state. Not for itself is it to be praised, but because it is an instrument of virtue and helps many thereby to gain a state of blessedness by avoiding the occasions of sin, and for this it is to be desired and praised. It makes a man despised and rejected among his fellows, rather than worshipped for his virtues; and this he may truly desire to suffer for Christ's sake. Christ, for our example, led a life of poverty, for He knew that for us it is often hard to enter Heaven through much love of riches and estate. Therefore He hath called men to hunger after Poverty, and saith to them that forsake all things for love of Him: *Ye that have left all things and followed Me shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel*.

They truly that have great poverty, yet lack the meekness and lowliness which Christ teaches, are more wretched than they that have great riches; for in the Day of Doom they shall not take high places in Heaven, but shall be clad with the doublet of confusion, which is the damnation of body and soul. But they that shine in meekness and

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lowliness shall have great riches, and shall sit at Christ's right hand.

Some men say: "We may not leave all, we must keep what is necessary in order that we may live; and that is lawful and allowed to us." But these men are less worthy, for they dare not suffer anguish, pain or great poverty for God. And if they would attain to the height of virtue, and attain by God's grace to the contemplation of heavenly things, they will forsake their secular occupations and errands, and rise unweariedly to prayer and meditation. And these love not to hold to their goods, but rather to forsake them all for Christ.

Take heed also not to seek more than is sufficient to keep for thy necessities, for this is frailty. And they that seek not after high things, must see that in small things also they have no pride nor presumption, so that they may ascend unto that orderly ruling of man's life of which I shall next treat.



BOOK THE FOURTH

OF THE RULING OR SETTING OF A MAN'S LIFE

THAT man may be rightly set to the worship of God, for the profit of his soul and for his neighbour's profit, here are four things to be considered.

Firstly : What defileth a man ?

Now there are three sins: of thought, of speech, and of action.

Man sinneth in thought when he thinketh aught against God, and if he occupy his mind with divers thoughts of this world and not with the praise and love of God.

He sinneth in speech when he perjures, complains, back-bites, or defends a wrong: and also when he bringeth forth idle, vain or foul speech from his mouth.

He sinneth in deed by many actions and on many occasions.

Secondly : What cleanseth a man from sin ?

Again I say there are three things:—viz., Contrition of thought—destroying all desires that belong not to the worship and love of God; and also Confession of sin, by word of mouth, which should be timely, naked, and open; and satisfaction of deed, which again

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hath three parts,—viz., fasting, because man hath sinned against himself; prayer, for he has sinned against God; and almsgiving, for he has sinned against his neighbour. . . .

Thirdly : That which keepeth us in purity of life is a lively thought of God at all times, and a busy guard over our senses, that the governing-bridle may restrain them wisely in all things. And to keep the mouth pure we must have carefulness of speech, avoid much conversation, and hate lying. And to keep our actions pure, moderation in meat, avoidance of evil company, and a constant remembrance of death.

Fourthly : To conform ourselves unto God's will, we have, first, the example of others, and of God's goodness, which is gotten by meditation and prayer, and joy of the heavenly Kingdom, by our manner of contemplation. To live in such a way a godly man is like unto *a tree that is set by the running waters*, and that shall always be green in virtue, and never dry in sin, and it *shall yield fruit in time*, which fruits are good works, as examples to others, and good words for the worship of God; and neither of these for vain-glory.

It is necessary to speak against those that give example of fasting in time of eating—and the reverse also—and against covetous men that give away fruit when it is rotten,

or else give nothing at all till they die. Therefore, he prayeth wisely that said *Godliness, discipline and knowledge teach me* : for what is discipline but the ordering and correcting of our manner of life ? First, therefore, by discipline we are taught righteousness, and corrected of evil-doing; and after that we know what we should do and what we should avoid. And so at the last we desire no worldly nor fleshly thing, but things heavenly and eternal.

And when a man setteth all his business upon the will of his Maker, and peradventure hath surpassed others in his steadfast love and desire of Christ, yet ought he not therefore to rejoyce nor praise himself, but rather to hold himself most foul and wretched. He shall therefore set all others before himself, and desire never to be called holy, but contrariwise to be despised of men; and when he cometh among men, let him contrive to be last in number and least in opinion. For the greater thou art, the more shouldst thou humble thyself in all things. Almighty God is great, and worshipped by the meek; but by the proud He is despised, for these seek not His worship, but their own pleasure. If, in this life, thou art receiving fame and praise, and it pleaseth thee, thou hast received thy reward. And if thou dost seem a marvel of penance and chastity, while

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thou art in reality taking more pleasure in men than in the angels, in time to come thou wilt suffer torment.

Therefore despise thyself utterly and forsake all this world's joys, do nothing but in the sight of God's love, that both inwardly and outwardly thou shouldst declare His praise.

In meat and drink be sparing and wise, and while thou eatest and drinkest let not the thought of God pass from thy mind, but praise, bless and glorify Him in every morsel, so that thy heart be more set on God's love than on thy meat and drink, and thy soul be not parted from God at any hour. Thus doing thou shalt desire a crown before Christ Jesus, and shall avoid the fiend's temptations that beguile so many men in meat and drink. Many in eating take always either too much or too little, and so in these ways are cast down. These unwise and untaught men know not the sweetness of Christ's love, and think that their unwise abstinence means holiness, and that they can merit nothing of God unless they be known amongst men by their singular rigour of abstinence. But truly, abstinence of itself is not holy; though, if it be discreet, it helpeth towards holiness. But if it be indiscreet it hindereth holiness, for it destroyeth discipline, without which virtues are often turned into vices. If a

man will to take on himself singular forms of abstinence, he ought to avoid doing thus in the sight of men, lest he grow proud by their praise, and so lose all.

Men truly think those holiest who abstain the most, but in truth, oftentimes these are the worst sinners. He that has tasted the sweetness of eternal love, shall never deem that he may be greater than any man. I suppose the best and most fitting to God is that we conform in meat and drink to the time and the place, and in honesty with whomsoever we may be; that we may neither seem wilful nor hypocrites. Know truly that if one or two think well of a man, there are many others that will call him a deceiver and hypocrite. But some are so covetous of vain-glory that they refuse to be reckoned as ordinary men, for either they eat so little that they draw upon themselves the notice and speech of men, or else they procure different kinds of meat to appear different from others; which folly and obstinacy be far from me!

Truly it is wholesome counsel that they who can do little fasting should do greater abstinence, and if they may not do great abstinence, let them have contrition of mind. And they that do great abstinence should approve others who are greater in virtues. For while abstinence is a virtue and to be

praised, yet, unless it goeth with meekness and charity, it is naught in the sight of Christ. For virtue is truly more, the less it is seen of men. Who may tell how much love a man has for God, and how great compassion for his neighbour? Doubtless the virtue of charity surpasseth all other works, and oftentimes it happens that a man who seemeth to fast little, is yet most fervent in love to Christ.

It behoveth him that would follow the will of God to be truly strong. The flesh is very frail; and, if enfeebled with disease, a man may desire to pray but find it hard to lift up his mind to God with strong desire. I would rather a man failed because of the greatness of his love, than from too much fasting. The Spouse said, *Show me my love, for I long for love.*

Be thou, therefore, steadfast in all thy ways, and set thy life after this Rule shewed unto thee; and if thou canst not get in the beginning what thou desirest, mistrust not but abide steadfast, for in time, by long use, thou shalt come to Perfection.

If thou art a pilgrim and art resting on thy way, keep thine eyes fixed on God, whatever thou dost; let not thy thought go from Him, and think that time lost when thou thinkest not upon Him.

In the night love Him and desire His love, and occupy thyself in no other way but by

prayer and thoughts of Him. See that thou flow not with vain thoughts, nor give thyself too many cares, but study to receive and keep steadfastness in mind.

He who dreads to suffer adversity, knows not how it behoves him to despise the world; and he that takes pleasure in earthly things, is far from the everlasting joys. Forsooth a perfect lover joys to die, and meekly he suffers life. To which perfect love if thou wouldst attain, by Christ's gift, it may not be without tribulation and temptation, to which next our words shall turn.



BOOK THE FIFTH

OF TRIBULATION

WHEN the devil seeth a man perfectly turned to God, following Christ's steps, despising this world, loving and seeking things unseen, taking perfect penance, purging himself from all filth of mind and body, he prepareth a thousand wiles to turn him again to the love of this world and to beguile him into sin.

He raiseth against him persecution, tribulation, slander, blame of false sins, and hatreds, that he may be overcome by pains, when he could not be beguiled by prosperity. And the devil neglects nothing that may part us from the desire of the sweetness of Everlasting Love, and defile us in the pit of wretchedness—that were now more wretched to us than I can tell! For who may think how great is the misery of one who hath come from the delights of the King's Table to eat swine's meat? And yet more miserable is he that hath forsaken the delicious meat of the Uncreated Wisdom, and put himself again under the bondage

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of the flesh! Therefore, how to do against the temptations and tribulations of the enemy, and how to withstand him, must Patience teach us, and of Patience shall I next speak.



BOOK THE SIXTH

OF PATIENCE

GOD'S children despise unlawful pleasures and worldly solace, forsaking them for the love of Christ. Truly he that hath fed on heavenly Bread hath no desire for the lusts of the world.

When temptation or tribulation come upon him, then it is time to be girded with spiritual armour, and to go forth to do battle, and with steadfast love and faith temptations are overcome. And these truly by Patience.

What is Patience but the willing suffering of adversity? He, therefore, that is truly patient grumbleth not, but rather giveth praise to God at all times. The more patient a man is in his vexations, the more glorious shall he be in Heaven. Gladly, therefore, are temptations to be suffered in adversity, vexations, bitterness, pain, sickness and thirst, for thereby our sins are cleansed and our merit increased.

Either in this life must we suffer cleansing fires, or else in hell be crucified and punished. Choose, therefore, which ye shall escape? Here truly we might suffer a little pain, if thereby with joy we may draw near to God, and avoid all pain to come. Therefore

tribulations are sent to us, to draw us from the love of this world, that in the life to come we be not more grievously punished.

If sinners should, as it were, build upon our back, let us suffer it patiently, and be not thereby annoyed; for if they put us to a little pain now, it shall be for us a crown, but to them it will be torment. Truly oft sinners are suffered to pass through this life without great tribulation, for no joy is laid up for them in the life to come. Therefore do holy men love tribulation, for thereby they attain to everlasting happiness; while those who fly from adversity or else groan under it, and are given to temporal joys, are deprived of everlasting things. For in outward things they find their only solace, and have no savour for heavenly joys.

No reasonable soul is without some love—either of creatures or of its Creator. If it love creatures only, it is deprived of God, and goeth unto death. Such affection is truly labour and folly in the beginning, languor and wretchedness in the middle, and hatred and pain at the end.

Soothly he that loves God forsaketh the world, and thinketh full sweetly in great refreshment upon God. He sets a guard on his outward wits, that death ascend not in at the windows, and that he be not occupied with empty and unprofitable things.

And sometimes there are arrayed against him reproof and slander and scorn, so that it becomes needful for him to take the shield of Patience; to be readier to forget wrongs than to recognise them, to pray for the conversion of those that hate him and cast him down, to care not how to please men, but to dread offending his God.

Keep the flesh, therefore, subject, that the spirit be not subjected. Truly temptations that we do not consent to, are matter of virtue acquired; and no man knows whether he be weak or strong until he be tried. Likewise no man can be reckoned patient unless he be tempted and tried. For many seem patient before they are pricked; but, as soon as any soft blast of correction assail them, they turn to wrath and bitterness, and for one word against them they will give back two more. Therefore the darts of the enemy must be met by meekness and by the sweetness of God's love.

Temptations must not be yielded to, even though they be most grievous, for the greater the battle, the worthier the victory and the crown. As says the Psalm: *Blessed be the man that suffers temptation, for when he is proved he shall take the crown of life*, that God hath promised to His lovers.

If, indeed, thou art in the way of perfection, thou shalt reckon despising as

praising, poverty as riches, hunger as meat. Hate thou shalt covet, for it is as worthy to thee as man's praise. Flatterers' tongues beguile many, back-biters' tongues destroy many. Despise thou, therefore, all worship and vain-glory, all wrath and hatred; suffer detractions meekly, and thus to the heavenly Kingdom thou shalt attain surely.

We fall often that, being taught by these cases, we may stand more firmly; as it is written that whatever happens to a righteous man it shall not move him. And thus disposed to righteousness, it is no marvel that thou canst overcome all temptation and all malice, and that with all thy mind thou shalt draw near unto Christ.



BOOK THE SEVENTH

OF PRAYER

IF thou be set in temptation or tribulation, at once run to prayer. Truly if thou pray clearly, thou shalt have help. Flutterings sometime come and waverings of heart, and thoughts ravish the heart to diverse things, and suffer it not to stand in praising of God. Then, peradventure, it were good awhile to think of holiness, till the mind become more stable, and so its prayers be fulfilled. Truly, if thou hast left all worldly occupations for love of God, and always be given to holy meditation and holy prayer, I trow by God's grace, within a short space, thou shalt find thy heart stable, and love and pray. Not now into this and now into that shouldst thou waver, but rather abide in rest and endless peace.

Full much doth it comfort to get this stableness of heart; in use of prayers to be busy, and psalms devoutly to sing. With busy prayers truly we overcome the fiends, and loosen their watchings and stirrings. They are enfeebled, and as it were without strength, while we abide strong in prayer, and are not overcome.

Those men, that with long exercise truly have custom to pray, find sometimes more sweetness and more fervent desire of praying. Therefore, while sweetness and heat last, it is good for prayers not to cease. When these cease—which often happens to corruptible flesh—they may turn them to the holy Scriptures to read, or do some other profitable thing, so that they suffer not their thoughts to waver from God, that when they rise to pray they be more alive than they were before.

Truly, then, do we pray well when we think of no other thing, but all our mind is addressed to Heaven, and our soul inflamed with fire of the Holy Ghost. Thus in us truly is seen a marvellous plenty of God's goodness, for of the innermost marrow of our hearts shall rise the love of God. And all our prayer with desire and effect shall be so that we overrun not the words, but offer all syllables with a great cry and desire to our Lord. Our heart with hot fire is kindled, our prayer also is kindled; and in the savour of the sweetness of our mouth it is offered in the sight of God, so that it is great joy to pray. For whilst in prayer a marvellous sweetness is given to the one praying, the prayer is changed to song.

Some there are that rather take heed to meditation than to prayer, unknowing that

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God's speech is fired, with which filth of sins is cleansed, and minds are inflamed with love. They say they will first *think*, and so fix their hearts: but the latter are fixed so that they are not comforted to prayer. Though we may not gather our hearts together as we would, yet may we not cease, but study to grow, that at the last Jesus Christ may stable us. To the which meditation helpeth, if it pass not measure and manner.



BOOK THE EIGHTH

OF MEDITATION

MEDITATION of Christ's Passion and His deeds is good, and oft to record what pains and wretchedness He freely took for our healing, in going and preaching, in hunger, thirst, cold, heat, reproaches and cursings and sufferings, so that it be not grievous to an unprofitable servant to follow his Lord and Emperor. He truly that says he dwelleth in Christ, ought to go even as He did.

Christ truly says by Jeremy: *Have mind of my poverty and of my passage, of wormwood and gall*—that is to say, of the sorrow and bitterness by which I went from the world to the Father.

By this mind truly and by meditation, the fiend is overcome and his habits destroyed, for fleshly temptations it slackens, and the soul is kindled to Christ's love. It raises the mind, cleanses and purges it also. I trow this thought of all others is most profitable to them that are newly turned to Christ. Therefore is truly shewed the manhood of Jesus Christ, in the which man should be glad, in which he has matter of

Joy and also mourning—Joy for our Redemption, heaviness for filth of our sinning—for the which it is full grievous that so worthy an Offering is offered. For the ignorant fleshly soul is not ravished into beholding of the Godhead, unless first it be made spiritual, and all fleshly hinderings are foregone. Truly when it begins to have a clean heart, and no image of bodily thing beguileth it, then securely it is admitted to high things, that in the love of God it may be wonderfully glad.

Some truly think of the Joy of the blessed angels, and of holy souls with Christ joyous; and this thought belongeth to Contemplation. Some think of the wretchedness of man's condition and the filth of him, and in their thoughts they dispute of man's folly that, for vanities of this life, forget the Joys unseen. Others their thoughts thus dispose them that they will have no thing but loving and desire of their Maker, that they may love Him so far as is possible to men in this life. To this meditation no man cometh but he that in these things before rehearsed is much versed. Truly this is a manner more excellent, and maketh a man most contemplative. Therefore, as there are diverse works and uses of Saints, so there are divers thoughts. Yet all go to the end, for they come of one spring, and to one bliss they come or lead, by one

charity that is more in one than in another. Therefore the Psalm sayeth, *Deduxit me super semitas justitiae*—that is, *He has led me upon the paths of righteousness*—as if to say, there is one Righteousness, but many paths by the which we are led to the Joy of Everlasting Life. For while all are one band, they are of divers needs, and so to the one Righteousness, to God, are they led by divers paths. Some go by a low path, some by a mean, and some by a high.

To him truly is given the higher path that is called to love Christ endlessly, not because of works more high than another, or more gifts, or more sufferings, but for that he loves more. The which love is heat and sweetness, and in all such things men seek rest. No man may set himself in any of these paths, but each taketh that to which God chooseth him.

Sometime they that seem in the higher path are in the lower, and the reverse; for that is inward only known in a soul before God, not in any thing that may be done of man outwardly. After the disposition and desire of their meditation are men dressed to this path or to that. Of no man by outward works may it be known whether he be more or less before God.

It is folly, therefore, to deem of those chosen and say, "He passes him," or "his

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merits are far less than his," when they plainly know not the minds, the which, if they knew, they might judge rightly.

Truly, therefore, to all creatures God giveth counsel, that they despise not some too much, nor worship some too much: for, doubtless, if they saw men's hearts, many that they worship they would despise as stinking and foul, and others that they set no store by, nor yet desire to see, they would worship as most lovely and holy angels.

Good thoughts and meditations be of God's choosing; such by His grace He casteth down to each one as best accord with their state and condition.

Therefore I may tell thee my meditation, but which is most effectual for thee I cannot discover to thee, for I see not thy inward desire.

I trow truly that those meditations please God most, and profit most, that God by His mercy casteth down into thee. Nevertheless, in the beginning thou mayst have other men's words—that I know well in myself.

Truly if thou despise the teaching of the doctors, and trow that thou thyself may find better than they teach thee in their writing, know forsooth thou shalt not taste Christ's love.

A foolish saying it is truly ! " God taught them, why therefore should He not teach

me?" I answer thee: "Because thou art not such a one as they." Thou art proud and sturdy, and they were lowly and meek; they presumed not to ask anything of God, but, humbling themselves, took knowledge of the Saints. Therefore He taught them, that we in their books should be taught.

Truly if thou desire to have Christ's love in thy meditation, or to sound His praises, it seemeth to me that thou art well disposed. But the thoughts in which thou feelest more sweetness in God profit thee more.



BOOK THE NINTH

OF READING

IF thou desire to come to the love of God, and in desire to be kindled of heavenly Joys, and to be brought to the despising of earthly things, be not negligent in thinking and reading of Holy Scriptures, and most in those places where it speaks of God's love, and of the contemplative life. But let hard sentences be left to disputers and witty men that be long time versed in holy doctrine.

Holy Scriptures help us truly to profit much. In these we know our faults and good deeds, in which things we sin, in which not, what we shall do and what forbear, and the most subtle devices of our enemies are shewed to us.

They kindle us to love, and prick us to weeping.

They provide us a goodly shield if we have delight in them. But let no covetousness of worship, favour, or praise of men, set us to con the Scriptures, but only the intent to please God, that we may know how we should love Him, and teach our neighbour the same; not to be holden wise amongst men, but rather to hide our knowledge than

shew it to be praised, as it is said: *In corde meo abscondi eloquia tua ut non peccem tibi*—that is, *In my heart I hid Thy words that I sin not to Thee in empty or vain shewing*. The cause, therefore, of our speaking should be only the praise of God and the edification of our neighbour, that it may be fulfilled of us, *Semper laus eius in ore meo* (*Always His praises be in my mouth*), and that is when we seek not our own worship, and against His praise we speak not.



BOOK THE TENTH

OF CLEANNESSE OF MIND

CLEANNESSE I say that in this life may be had—for how may perfect cleanness be gotten here, where oft at least with venial sins man is filled? Saints' feet must needs be washed, for they draw dust of the earth. Who then may truly say, "I am clean of sin"? Truly none in this life, for, as says Job, *Si lotus fuero aquis nivis et effulserint velut mundissimae manus meae, tamen sordibus intinges me, et abominabuntur me vestimenta mea*—that is to say, *If I be washed with snow water*—that is to mean true penance—and *if my hands shine as cleansed*—for works of innocence—yet *shall thou touch me with filth*—for venial sins that may not be eschewed—and *my garments shall be an abomination*—that is to say, my flesh maketh me abominable of myself, and sensuality that is so frail, slippery, and ready to love the vanity of this world, oftentimes maketh me to sin. Therefore says the Apostle, *Non regnet peccatum in nostro mortali corpore* (*Let not sin reign in our deadly body*), as who would say, "Sin in us may be deposed, but it may not cease."

What cleanness, therefore, may man have in this life? Truly worthy and great cleanness, if he rightly use himself in study of reading, prayer and meditation, as it before is noted. Truly though he sometimes sin venially, yet soon, if that his whole mind be addressed to God, sin is destroyed. Truly the heat of charity in him wastes all the rust of sin, as if it were a drop of water in a great fire.

The virtue, therefore, of a cleansed soul is to have the mind busy to God; for in this degree all the thought is addressed to Christ, all the mind is spread unto Him, though it seem he speak to others.

Truly in a clean conscience is nothing bitter, sharp, or hard, but all sweet and lovely.

Of cleanness of heart rise songs of Joy, sweet ditty, and joyful mirth.

Then full oft a wonderful Joy of God is given, and heavenly song is shed within.

In this state a man may know that he is in charity; he shall never lose that height, if he live in great dread—not of suffering torments—but that he offend not his Lover.

I spare to say more here, for meseems a full great wretch, for oft my flesh is annoyed and tried.



BOOK THE ELEVENTH

OF THE LOVE OF GOD

O SWEET light and delectable, that is my Maker unmade, light the face and sharpness of my inward eye with clearness unmade, and my mind, that being pithily cleansed from uncleanness, and marvellous made with gifts, it may swiftly flee into the mirth of love. Kindle it with Thy savour, that I may sit and rest in Thee, Jesus, joyous; and going as it were ravished in heavenly sweetness and stable in beholding of things unseen, never but in God shall I be glad.

O Love Everlasting, inflame my soul to love God that nothing burn in me but His beseechings. O good Jesu, who shall grant me to feel Thee, that none other beside Thee may be felt nor seen? Shed Thyself into the innermost of my soul; come into my heart, and fill it with the clearest sweetness. Moisten my mind with the hot wine of Thy sweet love, that all ills and all scornful imaginations be forgotten; that having Thee only I may be glad, and joy in Jesu, my God. Henceforward, sweetest Lord, go not from me: but busily with me abide in Thy sweet-

ness; for only His presence to me is solace, and only His absence maketh me heavy.

O Holy Ghost, that giveth grace where Thou wilt, come into me, and ravish me to Thee. Change with gifts honey-sweet, the nature that Thou hast made, that in Thy loving Joy fulfilled, my soul may despise and cast away all things in this world. Burn my reins with Thy fire, that mine heart on Thine Altar shall burn endlessly. O sweet and true Joy! I pray Thee, come! Come, sweet and most desired! Come, my Love! Come, all my comfort!

Turn into this soul longing for Thee and to Thee with sweet heat. Kindle with Thy heat the whole of my heart. With Thy light lighten mine inner parts; with honey-song of love feed me. In this and suchlike meditations be thou glad, my soul, that thou mayst come to the pith of love. Love truly suffers, not that a loving soul should abide in itself, but ravisheth it out to the lover, that the soul is more there, where it loves, than where the body is that lives and feels it.

Three degrees soothly there be of Christ's love, into which, from one to another, he is called that is chosen to love. The first is called "unable to be overcome": the second "unable to be parted": the third is called "singular," or "oned."

Truly then is love unable to be overcome,

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when it may be overcome with no other desire; when first the lover casts away all hindrances and all temptations, and destroys all fleshly desires; and when he suffers patiently all griefs for Christ, and with no flattering and no liking is overcome. All labour is light to a lover; no better may no man overcome labour than by love.

Love truly is then unable to be parted, when with great love the mind is kindled, and draws to Christ with thought undivided. Forsooth it suffers Him not a minute to pass from the mind, but, as if it were imprisoned in heart, to Him it sighs, Him it cries with His love to be holden, to loose the fetters of mortality, to lead it only to its desires. And this name "Jesus" he worships and loves, in so much that in his mind it rests busily. When, therefore, the heart of Christ is in the heart of God's lover, and the world is despised so much that other desires of love may not overcome it, it is called "high." But when he to Christ holdeth undeparted, of Christ ever thinking, by no occasion Him forgetting, everlasting and undeparted it is called.

And what may love become here, or more, if this be high and everlasting?

This, then, is the third degree called singular. One thing it is to be "high," and another to be all "oned" to Him. Also it is

a different thing ever to have Him present, and another to have no other companion. We may truly have many companions, and yet have a place for Him before all. If you truly seek any other comfort, or receive other than of thy God, and if peradventure you love such, it is not "singular" love. Therefore, thou seest what great worthiness it is to increase when thou art "high," that thou mayst be alone or "oned." To this "singular" degree, therefore, love ascends when it excludeth all comfort but that which is in Jesus, when nothing but Jesus shall suffice to him.

In this third degree the soul is set to love Him alone; to Christ alone it yearns, Christ alone it desires. Only in His desire it abides, to Him it sighs, in Him it burns, in His warmth it rests. Nothing else to it is sweet, nothing else it savours: but in Jesus is it made sweet, in whose mind all is song of music, in feast of wine. Whatever the self offer to itself, or what cometh to its mind, soon it is cast back and suddenly despised, if it serve not His desire, or accord not to His will.

Whatever he doeth, it seemeth unprofitable and intolerable unless it run and lead his desire to Christ.

When he may love Christ, all things that he will have he trows he hath; and without

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Him all things vex him and wax foul. But for that he trows to love Him endlessly, steadfastly, he abideth in his body, and wearies not in heart, but loves perseveringly, and suffers all things gladly. And the more that thus in Him it lives, the more in love it is kindled, and is made more like unto Him. The more it is ravished inward to Joy, the less it is occupied with outward things, and the less it is filled with heaviness and the cares of this life. And so it is, in a soul that at first was unable to suffer pain, that no anguish now hindereth, for in God is ever his Joy.

O my Soul ! cease from love of this world, and melt in Christ's love ! Put all away, that it be sweet to speak of Him, to read, to write, to think, to pray to Him, Him ever to praise. O God ! my soul, devoted to Thee, desires to see Thee ; afar from Thee it cries, in Thee it burns, in Thy love it longs. O Love that failest not, Thou hast overcome me ! O Everlasting Sweetness, O Fairness, my heart hast Thou wounded. Now overcome and wounded I fall, scarcely for joy I live, almost I die ; for I may not suffer sweetness of so great majesty, in flesh that will rot. All my heart, truly fastened in desire of Jesus, is turned into heat of love, and it is swallowed into another Joy and another form. Therefore, good Jesus, have

mercy on a wretch. Show Thyself to me that longs, give medicine to my sickness. He that loves Thee not, loses all together; he that follows Thee not, is mad! Ever therefore be Thou my Joy, Love and Desire, that I may see Thee in Sion, O God of gods!

Charity truly is noblest of virtues, most excellent and sweetest, that Jesus be loved by the lover, and Christ with the chosen soul be everlastingly coupled. In us it reforms the image of the High Trinity, and maketh the creature likest to the Maker.

O Gift of Love, what is it worth before all other gifts that challenges even the high degree of angels! The more truly that a man shall partake of love in this life, the more and the higher in Heaven shall he be. O singular Joy of Love Everlasting, that ravisheth all his affections to heavens above all worlds, binding them with bands of Virtue. O dear Charity, in earth to him that has thee not, naught is wrought, whatever he have.

He truly that in thee is busy, is lifted into Joy above earth; he enters boldly the bed-chamber of the Everlasting King. See that thou art not ashamed to take Christ only. He it is that thou hast sought and loved. Christ is thine, hold Him, for He may not but take thee, He whom alone thou desirest to obey. O holy Charity! how sweet thou

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art, and comfortable. Thou makest whole that which was broken, the failing thou restorest, the bound thou deliverest, thou raisest man to the angels; sitting and resting thou raisest, and raised thou makest sweet.

In this degree or state love is chaste and holy, altogether fastened in that which is loved, nothing outward-seeking pleaseth it. Sweet smelling and wholesome in the soul it abideth, marvellous, past belief.

Of thee, loved Joy, without forgetting, it thinketh; to thee it ascendeth in desire, falleth in love, goeth in entreaty, overcometh in kissing, all melting in the Fire of Love.

Truly Christ's lover keeps no rank, nor covets no degree in this life, so that it be fervent and joyous in Christ's love, and more and more it thinks to love Him. God truly is infinite of greatness, better than we may think. Of sweetnesses unnumbered, of all things wrought unconceived, never may He be comprehended by us as He is in Himself everlastingly. But when the mind now beginneth to burn in desire of its Maker, it is made able to receive uncreated light, and is so inspired and fulfilled with gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that—as far as mortals may—it is raised to the sweetness of Everlasting Life. And while the soul is filled with sweetness of the Godhead and the warmth of its

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Maker's light, and is offered and accepted in sacrifice to the King Everlasting, it is as it were all consumed.

O merry Love! strong, ravishing, burning, wilful, unslaked, may all my soul be brought to thy service, and suffered to think of nothing but of thee. Christ is the beginning of our love, whom for Himself we love; whatever is to be loved, it is for Him, to whom we bring all we love.

Here soothly is shewed perfect love, when all the mind's intent and the privy work of the heart is lifted into God's love.

O undivided Love! O singular Love! From thy love thou wouldst never lose a sinner; it is not by thy Will that the wicked should suffer torment. More tolerable should be an untold grief, than a deadly sin. Therefore truly love thou God for Himself and for no other thing. Else how should God be all in each thing, if there be any fleshly love of man in a man?

O clear Charity, come into me, and take me into thee, and so present me before my Maker. Thou art a savour well tasted, a sweetness well smelled, a pleasant odour, a cleansing fire, a comfort everlasting. Thou makest men contemplative, Heaven's gate thou openest. The mouths of accusers thou coverest, good thou shewest, and a multitude of sins thou hidest. We love thee,

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we preach thee while we overcome the world
by thee, in whom we joy, and by thy heavenly
ladder ascend.

In thy sweetness turn aside unto me; me
and mine I commend to thee for ever.



BOOK THE TWELFTH

OF CONTEMPLATION

CONTEMPLATIVE life has three parts: Reading, Prayer, and Meditation.

In reading God speaks to us, in prayer we speak to God, in meditation angels come down and teach us that we err not. In prayer they ascend and offer our prayers to God, rejoicing in our profit, messengers between God and us. Truly prayer is a meek desire of the mind turned to God, of which He is pleased when it cometh to Him. Meditation on God and upon godly things is to be taken after reading, as it were the supplication or lifting up of incense.

To reading belong reason and enquiry into truth, as a goodly light to be shed upon us. To prayer belongeth praise and song, and in prayer there standeth contemplation. To meditation belongeth God's inspiration and understanding, wisdom and aspiration.

If it be asked, "What is contemplation?" it is hard to define. Some say contemplative life is naught else but a knowledge of things to come and hidden things, or study of God's words, or freedom from all outward concerns. Others say that contemplation

is freedom to see through the spectacles of wisdom, with a full high marvel. Others say it is a book of the wise beholding of the soul, outspread to behold greatness. Others say well that contemplation is the joy of heavenly things; others say better, that it is the death of the desires of the flesh, by the uplifting of the joys of the mind.

To me it seems that contemplation is to have in the mind the joyful song of God's love, with the sweetness of angels' praises. This is jubilation, which is the aim of the prayer of perfection and of devotion in this life. This is the possession of the mirthful mind, which seeth spiritually the Everlasting Lover, and breaketh forth with a loud voice to praise Him. This is the last and most perfect death to this life. The Psalm thereof says, *Blessed is the man that knoweth jubilation* in contemplation of God. Truly none alien to God can rejoice in Jesus, nor taste the sweetness of His love unless he ever desire to be enkindled with the Fire of Love Everlasting. With patience and meekness he must be made fair with all cleansing of soul and body, decked with spiritual adornments, lifted into contemplation, and follow after healing virtues unceasingly; by which we are cleansed from the wretchedness of our sins in this life, and in the blessed endless life are made free from all pain.

And even in this exile thou shalt be made worthy to feel the joyful mirth of God's love.

Therefore, be not slow to chastise thyself with prayers and watchings, and use holy meditations, for by such spiritual works, and by weeping and heaviness within, Christ's love shall doubtless be kindled in thee, and all virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost shall be shed into thy heart. Begin, therefore, by the exercise of voluntary poverty, so that thou desirest nothing in this world but to live soberly, chastely and humbly before God and man. It sometimes happens that, through poverty, we may have nothing; but to desire that we may have nothing is great virtue.

We may have many desires. Truly even the most perfect accept what is necessary, for he were not perfect if he should refuse to take that whereby he must live.

For in this manner must live the perfect man—to forsake and despise all for God, and yet to take his necessary meat and clothing; and if he come to want at any time, not to complain but to love God, and to refuse superfluity so far as he is able.

The warmer a man grows in the heat of everlasting light, the meeker shall he be in all his adversities. He that is truly meek despiseth himself, and is not provoked to

wrath. Therefore, giving himself to meditation, it is given to him to rise to the beholding of heavenly things by the sharpness of his mind purified, so that even if he suffer sickness of body, he shall be filled with heavenly joy. And truly he goeth not with a proud foot to seek outward things, but rejoiceth only in high delight in the sweetness of God's love; as if he were ravished in a trance, and marvellously is he glad !

Such forsooth is contemplation; and by long use of spiritual works we shall come to the contemplation of everlasting things. The mind is caught up to behold shadows of heavenly things as in a mirror, for while we walk by faith we shall see but as shadows, and as in a mirror. And if our spiritual eye be open to that spiritual light, it may not behold that light as it is; but yet it feels that it *is*, and holds it with joy and heat unknown. Wherefore in the Psalm it saith: *As is its darkness, so is its light thereof.*

Though truly all darkness of sin be gone from a holy soul, and the mind be purged and enlightened, yet while it abides in the flesh it may not perceive perfect Joy. Forsooth holy and contemplative men look upon God with clear vision—that is to say, their mind is opened, that all hindrances between God and man are put away—their hearts are cleansed, and they behold the citizens

of Heaven. Christ also gives us His resting darkness, and speaks to us in a pillar of cloud; but what is felt is full delectable.

Truly it is perfect love when a man still in the flesh rejoiceth only in God, and willeth nothing and desireth nothing but God and for God. Whereby it is shewn that holiness does not consist in the crying of the heart, or tears, or outward works, but in the sweetness of perfect charity and heavenly contemplation. Many are melted in tears, and afterwards turn to ill-doing; but no man occupieth himself with worldly business after He hath truly enjoyed Everlasting Love.

Weeping and sorrow belong to the unconverted and to beginners; but to rejoice in contemplation belongeth only to the perfect. He that does penance for a long time, while he feels the pricking of his conscience, doubtless feels that he has not yet come to perfect penance. *His tears are as bread to him day and night*, for, while he punisheth himself by sighs and tears, he hath not attained to the sweetness of contemplation.

Contemplative sweetness is obtained only by great labour, but with untold joy it is possessed. Forsooth it is not man's merit, but God's gift; and never yet, from the beginning until this day, can man be ravished in the contemplation of Everlasting Love

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until he hath completely forsaken all this world's vanities.

Moreover, he must be experienced in healthful and devout prayer, before he come to the contemplation of heavenly joys.

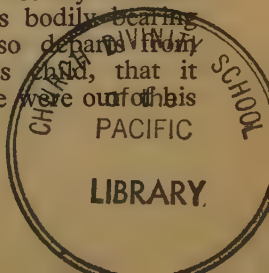
Contemplation is a sweet and desirable work, it gives gladness and no hurt, it maketh joyful, and man is only weary when it goeth from him.

Truly it behoves that he take great rest of body and mind, whom the fire of the Holy Ghost inflameth !

Many cannot rest in mind because of their unprofitable thoughts, and cannot fulfil the bidding of the Psalmist: *Be empty of worldly vanities, and see that I am God.*

Such wandering hearts are not able to taste and see how sweet our Lord is, nor how sweet are the heights of contemplation. Every contemplative man loveth solitude, in order that no man may hinder him from his fervent desires.

Truly, a very contemplative man is often deemed a fool, for his mind is so set on unseen things, and is so by Christ's love inflamed, that oft his bodily bearing changeth; and his body so departs from all earthly flesh as God's child, that it maketh him appear as if he were out of his mind.



Truly, while the soul in endless mirth of love gathers all within itself, it flows not outward to bodily things. And, because it is fed with inward affections, it is no marvel that it should say with sighs, *Who shall give me Thee, my Brother, that I may find Thee and kiss Thee?*

That is to say, "Loosed from the flesh I would be worthy to find Thee, and to see Thee face to face endlessly, and in this would be my Joy."

A devout soul given to contemplation and filled with eternal love despises the vain-glory of the world, and covets only to be in the enjoyment of Jesus and in the lovely company of the Angels, and worldly changes and adversities disturb it not.

Nothing is more profitable and nothing merrier than the grace of contemplation, that lifts us from the customs of this world, and brings us to God. What is the grace of contemplation but the beginning of Joy? And what is perfect Joy but Grace confirmed in us, in which we are kept in joyful and happy estate unto a glorious Eternity, with Saints and Angels to live in endless joy? And above all it is to know God truly, and to love Him perfectly: to see the shining of His Majesty, and with marvellous joy and melody to love Him in all eternity, to whom

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be worship and joy with thanksgiving in the world of worlds. Amen.

Here endeth the Twelfth Chapter of Richard Hampole, into English translated by brother Richard Misyn for the information of Christian souls, 1434.

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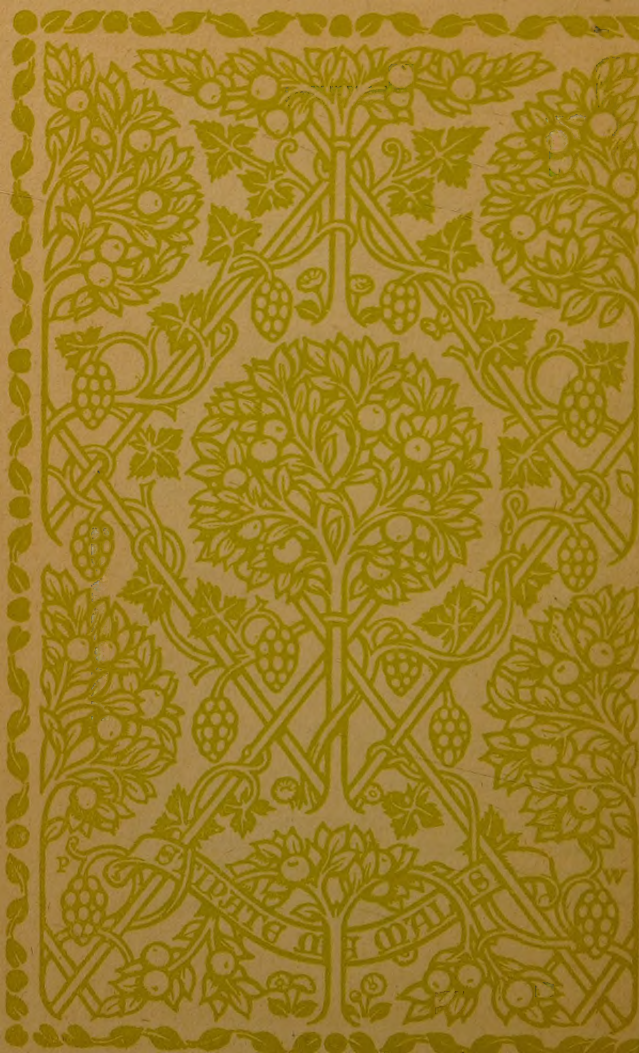
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